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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN FM ON TFG AND ERITREA DURING WYCOFF VISIT

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 2817

[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 2877

[1](#)C. ADDIS ABABA 2878

[1](#)D. ADDIS ABABA 2880

[1](#)E. ADDIS ABABA 2903

Classified By: Classified by CDA TMushingi for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs Seyoum Mesfin highlighted to visiting AF/DAS Wycoff the severe financial crisis facing the TFG, reiterating comments made by PM Meles. He also noted that Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Sheik Sharif had said during a recent visit that he would step down if it would help to stabilize Somalia, implying that the Sharif was extremely frustrated at his inability to garner needed domestic and international support. On Eritrea, Seyoum stated that President Isais would not change, but that Ethiopia would not try to dissuade Europe or other nations, including the United States from trying to engage the Eritrean leader. Seyoum reported that Ethiopia planned to attend the Sanaa Forum and to voice concern over Iran's possible role in supporting Huthi insurgents in Yemen's northwestern province. Turning to democracy and governance issues, Seyoum stated that an opposition victory in the 2010 election would be a success for the ruling party because it had created the institutions to allow such a transfer of power to take place. Wycoff advocated for a fair elections process and the creation of an open political environment that enabled participation in the elections by all parties. CDA also proposed that a USG-GOE working level group be formed in Addis to focus on economic reform, investment, and trade issues. Wycoff and CDA reminded the GoE of the upcoming high-level military visits and followed up on Leahy vetting and military supply issues raised with Prime Minister Meles (Reftel A). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs Seyoum Mesfin met with visiting AF/DAS Karl Wycoff and CDA Meece on November 19 for 90 minutes. Seyoum was joined by his Chief of Cabinet Mulugeta Zewdie, Americas Desk officer Tebeje Berhe Shook and Assistant Spokesman Wahide Belay. The USG was also represented Pol/Econ Deputy Counselor and Poloff.

TFG's Sharif Would Step Down to Stabilize Somalia

[1](#)3. (C) In discussing the Somalia Transitional Federal Government's (TFG) empty coffers, and largely mirroring the comments Prime Minister Meles had made to DAS and CDA earlier in the day (Reftel A), FM Seyoum said the TFG had not paid the salaries of cabinet members or Parliamentarians for five months, and that many legislators were living outside the country as a result. He stated that Sheik Sharif had said

during a recent visit to Addis that he would be ready to step down if it would help to stabilize Somalia. Seyoum added that when current TFG leaders were in the opposition, at least the League of Arab States supported them, but now that they are in the government, there is no financial support coming in from the Arab States. Wycoff reviewed U.S. efforts to garner support from partners, including European and Arab states, especially Gulf countries. On Kenya's "Jubaland Initiative" and the recent visit by officials from Kenya's Ministries of Security and Defense, Seyoum echoed points raised by Prime Minister Meles (Reftel), and reiterated that Ethiopia and Kenya had agreed to a coordination mechanism for intelligence sharing and technical assistance. Wycoff highlighted the U.S., strong opposition to this initiative and to any cross border operations or interference that could feed the risk of instability in the Horn.

14. (C) Wycoff noted that the USG had provided unparalleled assistance to TFG President Sheik Sharif in terms of diplomatic and direct budget support, training of combatants, and provision of ammunition, when it was critically needed. He emphasized that Somalia's TFG is nested in the Djibouti Peace Process and that the USG would continue to support that process and encourage others to do so as well. At the same time, he said the TFG must show accountability and transparency in both its receipts and expenditures or else donors will be unwilling to provide support and the possibilities for good governance, key to the TFG's viability, will be severely reduced. He noted that the U.S. has provided \$500,000 for the Price Waterhouse Coopers mechanism, but does not yet have the first report back.

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Seyoum: Eritrea's Isaiah will Not Change

15. (C) Turning to Eritrea, Seyoum responded to DAS Wycoff's mention of a recent Eritrean "charm offensive" (probably in response to the increased pressure being felt from the UNSC sanctions deliberations) for a visiting EC delegation to Asmara by saying "President Isaias will not change. We know him well. He is the State, the people, and the country." Seyoum said that Ethiopia would not discourage the Europeans or others from trying to engage the Eritrean leader. He noted that the Obama Administration was one of the first to attempt to do so. Seyoum reiterated the point made by Meles (Reftel A) that Eritrean citizens are being held hostage by Isais in having to pay a tax to the Eritrean government, and appealed for the sanction regime being considered by the UN to target the tax. He said that the draft sanction resolution presented by the Africa group to the U.N. Security Council is toothless and that such a diluted resolution would be meaningless to Isais and that "he would laugh." Wycoff noted the U.S., intentions to achieve the strongest possible resolution.

Iran's Support for Huthi
Insurgents in Yemen

16. (C) Seyoum raised Yemen and its issues with Huthi insurgents in the northwestern area of Yemen, mentioning Iran's possible role in supporting the insurgents. He said he would be leading a delegation to the Sanaa Forum and planned to express solidarity with Yemen, as well as send a clear message to Iran. Seyoum admitted the message might not mention Iran specifically, but asked that the USG pay particular attention to this issue.

Opposition Win Would Be Success for Incumbent

17. (C) DAS Wycoff raised the importance to the USG of human rights, democratization, and good governance in Ethiopia and urged that the government help to create conditions that enabled participation for all political parties in the 2010 parliamentary elections. He noted the importance of working

out mutually acceptable ways to move forward with voter registration, political campaigns, civic education, and media access for all parties. Seyoum responded that democratization is an uphill struggle and that the ruling party will continue to try to encourage opposition parties to join the process. He stated that if the opposition were to win the election, he would consider it a success, because the ruling party is the one that has "built the process and created the ballot and the institution to allow such a transfer of power to take place." He stressed that the government cannot afford violence.

Proposed Trade and Investment Working Group

¶18. (C) CDA, in a follow-up to the Nov. 5 bilateral meetings in Washington, proposed forming a USG-GOE working group in Addis to focus on economic reform, trade, and investment between the two countries. CDA reiterated the USG's desire that this group remain at a working level in order to promote idea sharing and brainstorming.

¶19. (C) CDA related his impending departure, and explained it was a result of legal restrictions due to his retired status. Seyoum noted that the Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States Samuel would also be departing post, and would most likely be replaced by a second temporary CDA.

Follow-Up on Leahy Vetting and Military Supplies

¶10. (C) DAS Wycoff announced that AFRICOM Commanding General Ward and DASD Huddleston would be visiting, as part of the follow-up to the November 5 talks. Reiterating the issues raised in the earlier meeting with PM Meles (Reftel A), Wycoff explained the nonwaivable Leahy Vetting requirements that must be met before the U.S. can provide training or equipment to foreign militaries. He explained that shipments of military equipment were backlogged in Djibouti because the names of Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) officers to whom the equipment would be delivered had not been submitted to the USG for Leahy vetting. CDA Meece described the second problem as another backlog in Djibouti, this time involving a

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cement shipment, destined for a DOD project in the Ethiopian town of Arba Minch, that is languishing for lack of Ethiopian paperwork. Seyoum asked if there had been a Note Verbal on this issue. He said he would personally contact the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's office to sort the issue out. (Note: Subsequent to the meeting post sent the requested Note Verbal to the Ministry of Finance and the issue was positively resolved.)

¶11. (U) DAS Wycoff cleared this message.
MUSHINGI